

Fuels and Fire Behavior Advisory

Southwest Oregon

7/20/2013



Subject: Prolonged abnormally dry conditions have led to the onset of drought which is expected to persist and intensify through the summer months. Fuel moisture values have responded accordingly and are at conditions typically observed in mid to late August.

Discussion: Above normal temperature and below normal precipitation the first half of the year has accelerated the conditioning (drying) of fuels. Dead fuels are at values that are critical and will burn more regularly and with greater intensity. Live fuels are available to contribute to fire spread and will exhibit high resistance to control. **The current fire environment is conducive to enhance and support large fire growth.**

Difference from normal conditions: Reports from the field indicate conditions in many areas are about two to four weeks ahead of schedule; 100 hr fuels are averaging 8% where normal values are typically 13%. 1000 hr fuels range from 13% to 16% (critical values are 13% and typically are not reached until mid-August). Many areas in SW Oregon are less than 50% average precipitation, the Siskiyou Mountains less than 25% since January 1. **Dry conditions are forecasted to persist or intensify in the coming weeks**, be mindful that the driest and hottest conditions are typically late July into August.

Concerns to Firefighters and the Public:

Expect a greater degree of resistance to control, direct attack on the flanks may not be a viable option. Aviation assets may be needed to support flanking attack.

Fire intensity may be too great earlier in the burn period and may extend into the evening hours.

Direct attack at the head of the fire in all fuels classes will not be an option especially when aligned with wind and/or slope.

Rate of Spread will be accelerated on steep slopes with modest winds, resulting in shorter time of escape to safety.

Pay close attention to changing conditions to include; fuel transition, slope change or reversal, aspect change and time of day. **Fire Behavior observed are about two to four weeks earlier than average.**

Mitigation Measures:

Indirect strategies may need to be identified and communicated early. Be cautious when going direct, ensure support is on site and readily available, reassess if resources are not available.

Anticipate slower production rates, additional resources may be needed to meet operational objectives.

Identify a solid anchor point and utilize flanking or pincer tactics. Do not over extend resource coverage "hold what can be held". Remember the greatest Value at Risk is the resources on scene!!!

Continually evaluate escape routes and safety zones. What was identified as a safety zone early in the shift may no longer be valid. Early recognition of escape to safety is imperative. Post lookouts that can assist with early warning.

Maintaining Situational Awareness is essential - **Understand the implications of change**, light flashy fuels will accelerate and burn quickly, larger fuels will slow spread but increase intensity. Be mindful of slope change, what was a backing fire could rapidly become a head fire. South and west aspects will be more active earlier in the burn period.